



# MiPOesias

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## INSIDE POETRY:

interview with **FRANZ WRIGHT**

by **JENNI RUSSELL**

**BETSY WHEELER**  
**CAMPBELL MCGRATH**

## NEW POETRY

**MARK BIBBINS**  
**AND MORE**

## PLUS:

**MICHAEL PARKER** reviews **ANNIE FINCH**

**APRIL CARTER GRANT** with burlesque-blues singer **MATHER LOUTH**





## ON THE COVER

**"MISS RED" BY HOLLY PICANO** 24" x 36" acrylic on canvas – "Miss Red" is a perfect example of Picano's use of color and attitude: Her inferno-red hair falls against an almost neon-green jawline. A curl of the same red hair partially covers the woman's eye as she looks up from her electric-blue glass of wine to meet the viewer's gaze. Holly believes people should celebrate their beauty and sensuality, and she captured that idea in this painting.



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## FEATURE

- 8 INSIDE POETRY: INTERVIEW WITH FRANZ WRIGHT** In the first edition of this periodic poetry column, Jenni Russell probes the poet on his most recent book, *Earlier Poems* (Knopf 2007), which is his first four books collected. Future editions may be interviews or book reviews.

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# Betsy Wheeler

## Swimming Underground, I Float Face Up Thinking of Railroads

This is the logic of a bottom-dweller.

This that old practice of wanting; the sound of a horsefly leashed to habit, his green eyes unblinking.

This mind-stable is not fit for children.

This was a station.

This crater-lake hooded with darkness.

This under rock, under soil, under sand, worms, grass, trees, sky, under the clouds and then the stars.

This ground is black water-echoes.

That railing keeps the peepers at a distance.

That road to the surface could slick me away.

This here the temptation.

This plotting best left to the fugitives.

Their absence slaves after their ghostliness: silent, man-shaped holes.

In this moment I wish you were here.

This hidden spot.

The lake is fed, as are we.

And in this way are we aided in reaching.

This next pool—shallow and young.

I fear this station abandoned.

The builders believed in their footing; the solid rock overhead uncertain but trusted.

This would be the start of their journey.



# Robbed and Swung Low Into Reverie

And so the wind, humid but welcome, comes around to rub its faint body against our houses, attaching everyone to everyone else. Nobody is famed for anything; not the hymn-writers, or sous-chefs, not the marathoners. All just living or have lived in the particular house of the body.

One body is similar in silhouette to eight other bodies, is opposite in skin texture to six. One body will fit perfectly in bed with nine others, will violently reject seven, and is momentarily indistinguishable from five. Here is where things get tricky.

Some of these bodies will find each other on scooters in the streets of Rome, or weeding in the public gardens of Minneapolis, maybe trespassing the high dunes of North Carolina's coastline. The best-known meetings will become the stuff of hymns. Others, the catalyst for wars. Were it up to me, I would have written one of the odds much higher. Guess which one.

I'd like to say our young bodies fit perfectly, but it's more accurate to say our limbs locked like softly notched gears, our engines wheeling. I was stunned, I mean stung, I mean our skin sung brightly on that foreign river. We looked impossible, effortless. A low tide. Love's circuitry unmapped but gently numbered. He was of the eight. Or maybe the nine. Oh, I believe in believing in the nines.

Betsy Wheeler just finished reading *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh* by Michael Chabon and feels utterly (fantastically) changed by it. She is co-editor, with Dean Gorman, of *Pilot* and Pilot Books. Her chapbook, *Start Here*, is forthcoming from Small Anchor Press.



Sophie Klahr

## Day Sail w/Dental Appreciation

The sky I tuck like a cold garage key  
into my little breast pockets.  
The water like interference  
or a vehicle to grace.  
There is no one here.  
Peter Bjork, you are my  
umlaut. I poke & tear you  
about my wrangled heart  
while your evil wool sock  
seeks a sort of nirvana.  
Peter Bjork, the tiniest man  
lives inside you. He wears  
blue deck shoes. Peter Bjork,  
I see you there beyond the jib,  
leaning rail-less & quantified.  
Your backside is luscious, methinks.  
Look there, in the fourth wave starboard:  
the beast grinning through the foam.

# Mark Bibbins

## Viva Isabella Blow

Tonight we walk across  
the grounds where only  
an hour ago fog blocked

a moon so brilliant that  
we now could cut each  
other's hair by its light.

Art on the walls, salt  
in the pond, the greenest  
grass between our toes—

we asked the driver to stop  
at the beach and then  
at the carnival and we

woke in Murray Hill  
by midnight.  
Those lives  
were probably someone

else's, but it pleased us  
to pose alongside them.  
Fake it till you break it was

the refrain that propped  
us up that summer. *I don't  
want to be kissed*

*by all and sundry,  
I want to be kissed by  
the people I love.*

Viewers, we knew  
better. This will be  
a year without hats.

## Prequel: West Broadway

An actual naked human stands  
on a pedestal in the street, naked  
and with arms outstretched, naked

amidst literal feathers blown—  
some clinging to skin and hair,  
some wavering along the concrete

or skyward—by a fan operated by  
an intern. Hair, makeup, lighting all  
represented; pedestal, body, feathers

all white. You see this naked body,  
this man or this woman, you notice it  
but don't stop because you figure they

are only making art, in which you don't  
believe unless it's used in advertising,  
in which you do. There is a war a few

blocks over, another war hiding  
behind a melancholy water tower.  
Maybe someone will take a hatchet

to our hyphenated necks but we're  
not going to bother with bodies  
like those any more. White galleries

up and down side streets hide all the art.  
City is hyperbole as ocean is hyperbole  
as desert is definitely hyperbole,

oasis burning out on the overrated  
horizon where every blue gets  
bleached into naked naked white.

# And Does This Team Look Tasty in Attack

Arms and legs cutting  
the numbered field

are meteorological  
but faster, a flock.

So far I've made  
a decent living proving

negatives: warily  
I wait, choosing

the nest over  
the eggs, acolyte

of mysterious ears  
and weirder eyes.

Yes, but what  
of exemplary movements

forming arcs and angles  
that argue against

the corporeal, even  
as they prove it—

this is what or these are  
all we need? Add more

weather to our misery  
and I think I trust it is.



Brian Battjer

Mark Bibbins has written *The Dance of No Hard Feelings*, forthcoming from Copper Canyon Press, and the Lambda Award-winning *Sky Lounge*. He lives in Manhattan and teaches at The New School.

## Intimacy Keeps Happening Here

*There's a ton of the twist  
but we're fresh out of shout.*

—James Murphy

Squeeze a megalopolis onto an island and look  
at what the ocean steals from our buildings, come

back tomorrow it will seem the same. Marigolds

grow vulgar in every square and the populace puts  
oily handprints on the huge cardboard sundial

near City Hall. Why does one block smell like poppers

and another, just south, goosedown? Eventually  
we learn to walk through anything, all our rhythms

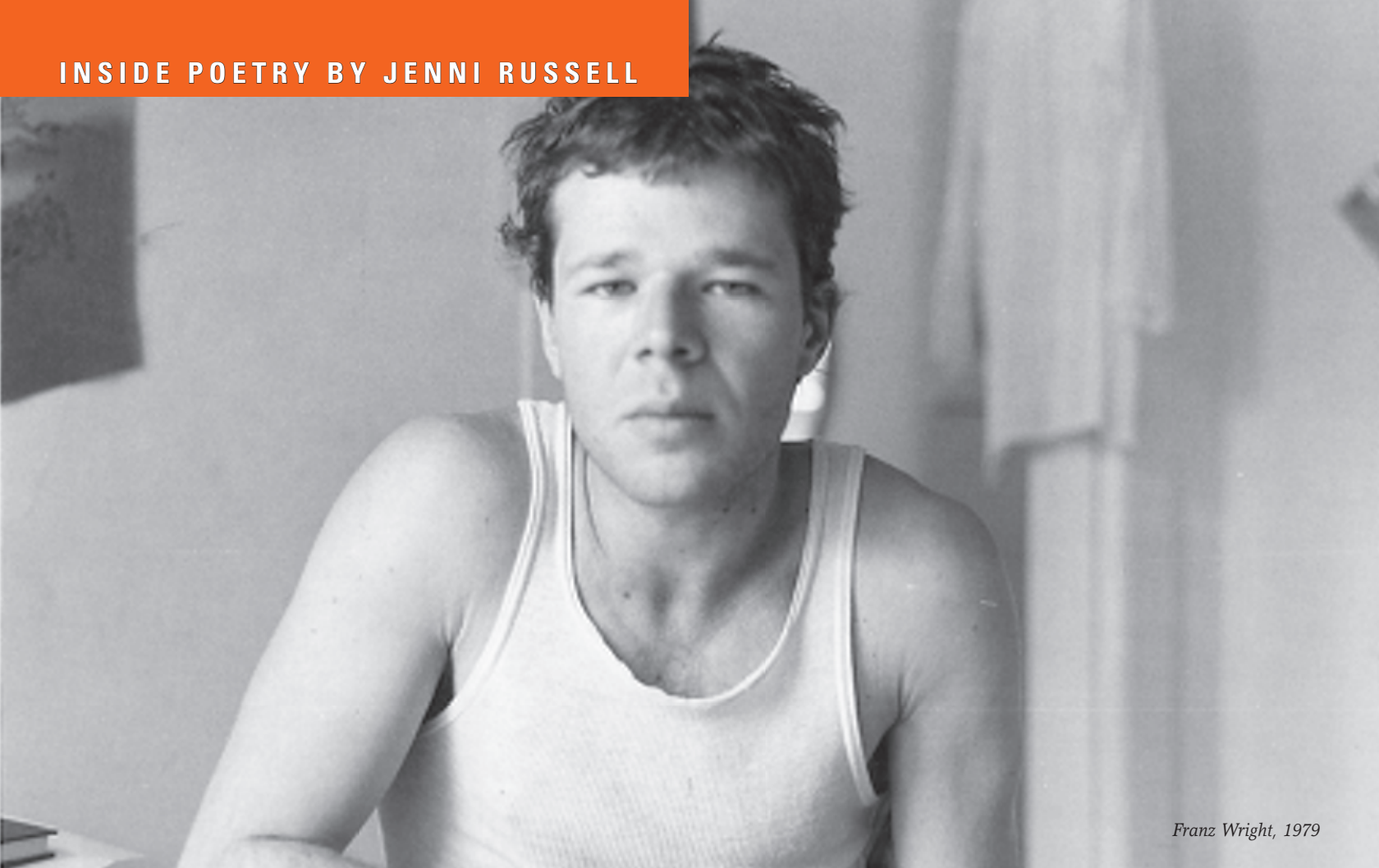
preprogrammed. Show me what doesn't cohere

and I'll show you something we haven't earned  
—no oath, no notes, no fingering RECORD—

even sun pummeling through the humid city air

is a dare. Come on, another dirigible is hooking up  
with our tallest building; truly, it never gets old.





Franz Wright, 1979

# Franz Wright

Franz Wright's most recent book, *Earlier Poems* (Knopf 2007), is his first four books collected. The gentle yet troubled voice that is peculiarly his own is recognizable in the first poem in the book and keeps a continuity throughout.

Wright, to judge from this collection, had found his voice, or it had found him, right from the start. In his younger years his life had much of the abysmal hard knocks of the American underground, yet the effect of it was to enhance and not degrade his sensitivity. Unnamable psychological states, tonal mastery, and an inventive style make these poems beautiful, haunting, and memorable. I recently asked Mr. Wright a series of questions, some of them about the poems found in this book.

*Your most recent book, Earlier Poems, is your first four books collected. While writing "The One Whose Eyes Open When You Close Your Eyes," where did you live? Did you have a job, friends, favorite hangout, high hopes for the future? What was your life like as a young poet?*

The poems in that first collection I wrote between the ages of 18 and, I guess, 27, something like that. It was finished not long after my dad's final illness and death in New York in 1980.

After I graduated from high school in 1971, I traveled around Europe for a few months, returned and spent some time with my dad in New York, returned to California (where I'd gone to high school) and worked at a gas station on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, then started at Oberlin College in northern Ohio in January 1972. I graduated from Oberlin in 1977 and tried grad school for a few months but it very quickly became apparent to me that I was not cut out for the MFA

route, so I left and a period of years of wandering began—I lived all over the country, though mainly in New York and New England. I was very serious about writing. That always came first, and frankly, when I look back, I am not sure how I survived. It was a different time, there was a more optimistic spirit in the country, and financially it was easier, I guess. I was always broke, but I didn't feel poor. I had wonderful friends who helped me survive. And I had more lives than a cat.

*One of my favorites in Earlier Poems is "Asking for my Younger Brother." Can you tell me a little about how this poem came to be?*

My brother had a much harder time than I did growing up. When my father left my mother (and, incidentally, my brother and me), he was only three, while I was a fairly independent and rowdy eight-year-old. My mother drove the three of us across country from Minneapolis to San Francisco in 1961. Later my mother remarried a guy who turned out to be incredibly brutal toward us, and my brother was always running away. So this was one time I went looking for him in Reno, Nevada. I left "home" when I was eighteen and never really went back.

*I find some of your poems to be tragic, but they're always resonating and entertaining. In other words, your poems are enjoyable to read. How important is it to entertain a reader?*

I'm not especially interested in trying to entertain anyone. I was just trying to make poems that were simple and clear and mysterious, to some degree—spontaneous-seeming but with depths. Poems that were, I used to say, completely concrete and completely unparaphrasable, like reality.

*Your poem "My Brother Takes a Hammer to the Mirror" is dedicated to the memory of Thomas James. Who is Thomas James and what kind of influence did he have on you?*

Thomas James published one very beautiful collection of poems in the mid-seventies and not long after apparently took his own life, as people sometimes do. I don't know anything about him, though I recall rumors of conflicted sexual identity, maybe some drugs were involved, nothing terribly unusual—I sensed in the title poem of his book, *Letters to a Stranger*, that he was drawn to or felt an ambivalent love for the Catholic Church, and I identified with that.

*Some poets feel uncomfortable writing so personally, and others have subjects that they feel are untouchable: family, work, or eroticism. Is there any subject you avoid? If not, which subject do you find most challenging?*

I write about whatever presents itself to me—I don't feel limited to any particular subject or mood. Language seems to dictate content, and whatever content there is seems to me fairly irrelevant until I am close to finishing a poem. I never know what I am going to write next until I find myself immersed in it.

*While reading the books in Earlier Poems, I noticed the first two books were serious in tone, whereas the last two books have more moments of dark humor, which is characteristic of your recent work. Did you eventually start to see the comedy in tragic situations? And do you think humor can be related to coping or healing?*

I don't know that there was anything deliberate about the appearance of a kind of dark humor—maybe it was just part of my personality (it runs

Franz Wright was born in Vienna in 1953 and grew up in the Northwest, the Midwest, and Northern California. His most recent works include *The Beforelife*; *Ill Lit: Selected and New Poems*; *Walking to Martha's Vineyard*, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize in April 2004; and *God's Silence*. His latest collection is 2007's *Earlier Poems*.

He is the recipient of two National Endowment for the Arts grants, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Whiting Fellowship, and the PEN/Voelcker Prize, among other honors. He works at the Edinburg Center for Mental Health and the Center for Grieving Children and Teenagers. Wright lives in Waltham, Massachusetts with his wife, Elizabeth.



in my family), and I reached a point where I felt confident enough in my writing to allow it to enter in a bit.

*You were recently the poet-in-residence at Brandeis University. You've also taught workshops in Provincetown and Emerson. Are there certain "tips" regarding craft or process that you always tell your students? Will you share one?*

I haven't done that much teaching, and when I do, I prefer teaching literature courses. Workshops can be fun, or dreadful, depending on rapport with the students, and I don't have anything against them—I try to get students to read a lot of poetry and become familiar with English prosody—though I think a writing workshop is the wrong place for a young person who is actually serious about becoming a writer.

*continued, next panel*



*Are there any poems in these first four books (Earlier Poems) that you think of as pivotal, ones that changed your approach, poems where you had a stylistic breakthrough?*

Actually, there are a number of poems which would fit your description—when I wrote “Alcohol”, for example (in Provincetown in the fall of 1983 while standing at the bar of an establishment I probably should not have been in, and while listening to some ear-shattering blues band, this poem more or less appeared before my eyes in its finished form, and I had to get out of there and write it down fast). I’d been reading a lot of Beckett and Pinter, and I think suddenly saw the possibility of a very stripped down kind of inner soliloquy, or a dramatic work in miniature which nevertheless possessed the sense a lyric poem can convey—with its access to certain improvisational uses of music and rhythm and syntax and lineation—of something infinite somehow housed in a little box that closes, as Yeats put it, with a satisfying click.

A short poem like “Untitled (Will I always be eleven...)” gave me an even more startling example of a certain knack I was trying to develop for a certain form of devastating understatement—while still preserving, behind its apparent plainness of diction, in a deniable or seemingly effortless way, an acute awareness of music and form. I learned to count every syllable a thousand times in an eleven-line poem like that one.

And in a piece like “Boy Leaving Home,” I found a way to write a long poem—and this is something that later came to interest me again when I was putting together my more recent last three collections—with subvertible narrative qualities as

well as, once again, a lot of the qualities of the short intense lyric of the kind I love, one that is severely formal and at the same time wildly and unpredictably open and free.

*What are some of the changes you have seen in American poetry since you first began writing? Do you feel positively, negatively, or indifferent to current trends or schools of thought?*

As far as different schools of thought, I think the differences between different poets have become grotesquely exaggerated on account of the introduction in what passes for literary criticism now of the crudest sort of highly personal venom on the part of writers who no doubt have much in common—at least their love of poetry!

I’ve mentioned (and this may come as a shock to some) my love of very formal poetry, yet I’m drawn as well to certain avant-garde experiments with language itself. Now in my own private opinion, a lot of the formal or the language-oriented poetry that has been written in this country over the past thirty or so years is so excruciatingly soulless and boring that it’s a true shame. I myself feel perfectly free to avail myself of any of the vastly various dimensions of the poem, from the most inscrutable and hermetic to the most nakedly simple and literal.

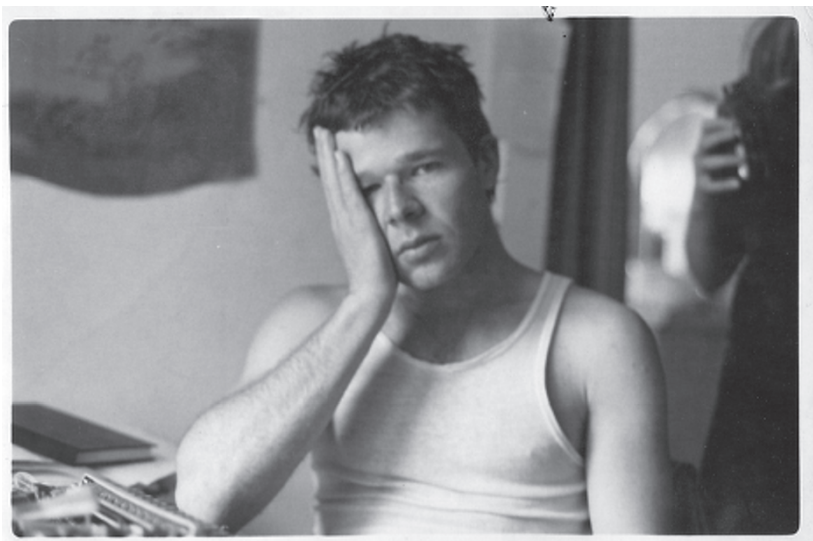
Another big change that’s occurred over time is of course the proliferation of writing

programs and now the internet—both of which, in my own humble and private opinion, are robbing young poets of the necessary decade (at least) of unselfconscious obscurity in which, by torturous trial and error on the part of someone with genuine talent, a few real poems might be written. I think that the more poetry gets written, the rarer poetry becomes. However, no doubt fate, as it always does, will conspire with circumstances to torture a few solitary sufferers into poetry and keep the whole thing going.

*You have a chapbook coming out with Vallum in Winter 2007. What other projects do you have in the works? Will you share a recent poem?*

I also have another chapbook prepared for fall publication by Marick Press in Michigan called *Wheeling Motel*. And I can’t give you that poem, as it is forthcoming in a well-known magazine that might frown on its appearing anywhere else, but I think I can share a poem that has already appeared (in the still-marvelous-after-all-these-years *Field Magazine*, in whose pages I’m proud to say I first started to publish poems back in the mid-seventies).

[See *Out of Delusion*, next panel.]





# Out of Delusion

In blue branches the moon feigning  
coma all morning, always  
fading and drifting away  
A book you wrote decades ago now  
seems stranger than somebody else's

Of the slumbering  
hand,  
this change  
ineluctable, cloudlike  
I speak in the mask of the first person

Not as myself, not in the glory  
of action, of experience  
when time and dying stop

but as anyone in the inbetween hours  
the hours alone, or traveling, or waking in a strange room  
or the moment when friends all fall silent, and each  
gazes into his own past and his own end  
That is what I meant, the way things look then

Music, silence, the word

I'd emulate  
these little  
candles just lit  
for the newly  
dead, enter  
the endless, the  
original words  
which shine  
from and behind  
and through words  
and be through with them  
through with all  
words

So desperately tired of the long, long flight from God

One hourglass of eventual  
cremation dust, thinking  
get me out of here

Riding the subway I glimpse myself  
in the seat next to mine  
in the adjacent universe  
one urinous drooling but otherwise fine human  
hamster attempting and repeatedly failing  
to pour cough syrup into a spoon

Thinking the sky is a river of souls  
as everyone knows  
darkness and blizzards  
come from the future  
and the road is long  
as the memory of a child

Thinking I  
could not bear to know what I do

No one knows no one like I do

Sparrow at the gates of heaven  
or maggot at the gates of heaven,  
there I am  
with all the others  
from the twentieth century of horror

And that is a beginning

# Cynthia Sailers

## Self Destruction

*Hysteria is not so much an illness as a technique  
of staying blank and absent from oneself, with  
symptoms as a substitute to screen this absence.—  
Masud Kahn*

Tie the sow up.  
“I’ve just been to the pork butchers”

and been watched.

And been owned.  
In a police resurrection

the condition is to spite the police.  
To free the frontiers of the time-lag,  
the most we can do

the symbol-rich other, helplessness,  
the “plumed fowl”

come, come, I can’t bear it any longer  
my mammal brain has been interrupted

I can’t call these parts dull  
when they’re attacking each other

the majority of childish things

the all in one  
pile of shit on the floor

my soup stinks  
of old behavior

of illness or whatever.

Why do I feel like you want to suffocate me  
before you make me better?

My legs are cut off like a cows  
and swimming in fluid—this  
cut, this fake desirous

lamb is my phallus. My imperial brain.

These rampant parts that I loved  
before my anxiety took over.

The telephone rings, I suppose  
it’s my heart. I hold it above  
the floor of the truck. I hold it  
against its death, but it’s too late.

It’s time for photographs. The hours  
they go from labor and thought.  
Or the thought is theirs

the animals that are these organs in dreams  
and look into their faces. I’m detached from their feeling,

sweating you out of my body.  
The figure flees. As if one were to say  
more violence. More law. By which

all the stock footage  
and the sucky foul-play

of being crazy, of being perverted  
time  
and so we recede. I want to say back,  
hello blanket. The blank shape

of my mind, having a victim  
send me a note of pure nothing

in the system of “I rid myself”

every time I notice why I was bad  
consummating with the future  
of a plastic machine or a corpse

while the decorous camera overtakes us,  
an invasive environment  
that had sullied our objects

and our workrooms. That which  
denies us, not knowing

the floor or in fondling  
our only capital.

And desire was inoperative  
a dog cooked like a dog.

Our skin, the flesh wound,

through which the white foam

of the ocean flung against us  
aging in stock film

or from the documents of television.

And the woman was naked,  
so that my tongue was against a dangerous fragment

in a company of which  
you and I are the same

peeing through the pipe  
of self-expression

or roping up the cattle or  
communicating with youth

who control the destruction  
of an idea like a building,

but their motive is slippery.

What you can use as a hostage  
making images like pornography

no environment is sleepy

but bemused “genitals...with purple  
veins” does something  
to our insides, in which we escape

or shove it back up into the wound.  
So that it’s crudeness is banal.  
That untimely totality

as supplement on my shoe  
some part

a state of vagueness, nothing  
to separate us from a situation

nothing to be the better part  
of me—

The face opened up on the screen.  
These lines of a wolf  
relate to a failure of a mother

because location is forever  
staring right back at me.

Accomplices suspend

a gap where real cultural happens.

Half of my family asks me to wake up,

a wild fantasy  
to cry over the drainpipe  
and construct oneself out of

the shadow  
the thing of non-fiction. My hand fits  
in her anus. I can’t believe

these skinny dens of cold  
as someone called us

the thing and I  
how they are like  
humans

behind a desk  
of sheer apathy.  
I can’t say.

It took awhile to find total isolation.

Someone has died.

Is that future predawn?

I see them in Rome. I imagine  
my shoulder is lecturing on morality

the girl I had raped, openly, or with  
anxiety. An alteration is not a symptom.

There wasn’t so much love as I loaded

the gun. Or there wasn’t so much blood  
as I performed the task.

We’re together documenting the cruelty

the public resumed laughing at us.

And so laughing was important to oppose  
the “nervous prostration”  
when labor fell apart  
or self expression fails.

Time supersedes  
so that no one could ever look at us

As though overcome by silence  
or by interpretation  
slouching toward, at best

I hope I cope with the grid  
at best I looked into  
her so that she wasn’t dropped

a zero essential

the new architecture  
of reassuring things

they have their baby. It’s just a boundary  
of excrement. It isn’t the same as death  
rooting around in filth  
like a machine. Blowing up the

empty binge

*continued, next panel*



I feel it when you kiss me.

The privacy of analysis

I will take my text  
I will take my image bastard

sewn on my sleeve.  
The hard surface cuts her hand  
a moment's relief,

but what is repeated is false  
an infection

to take my form of illness  
as a face darting  
toward danger. A sign

for remoteness.

I go to sleep among several prisons

so now I must go with escorts  
and chained to dread. The object  
is unconscious, moving towards disowning

who is it we shake its hand. A refusal of puberty  
and intellectualization.

This is the kitchen sink I squatted over  
with hysterical communication

my tights ripped along the seams.

She didn't want to know I'm nostalgic  
for ghosts. So I hid the temporary irritations

of war. And there is a war overhead, fighting  
planes and damaging the value

of a thing blown to pieces; therefore, justified.  
No person without the public  
to contain us. A block

surrounds my only inhibition. To put my hands  
somewhere courageous,

a privation. I remember when  
you were different, a colleague

stripped down in the factory.

The characters, obliterated, or drowning  
in ambiguity

like passion, a clean break is costly,  
"form is costly"

when we succeed  
to live in violence or absence

just saying that history  
is civil war

I have to seem lasting for "cross purposes"  
a guard, a ticket booth, abstraction

I remember her leaning over me.

I don't think I'm ashamed

in my dirty solitude  
the ugly thing

nesting in lots. And I love my moral  
masochism, a need for the other

I couldn't believe never  
fed me and so

"the vision without commentary."

The still-living transform  
the film, like the animate/inanimate

immediate relief, and yet, it moves  
closer in clothing items  
like a hermit moves in

boring freedom, striving

for a tiny speck of highway

I ash into the trashcan

given examples. Along our sleep  
once preoccupied  
the hysterical envelope,

play, provided a problem  
it was grass

that our decoy conditions  
and fights amused us

and the greatest bodies slit  
sideways,

and I have our out of it was being  
whored

or being oversensitive  
the term for self-cure  
we follow

and the lonely  
situation.  
The sexuality of

stating your desire like a broken teacup

I write nothing.

The background cannot exist  
without something to reflect

“ a flickering hesitation”

resolving one symptom  
meant to know

the lofty phallic woman  
with her legs spread  
over one truth,

one slip and would she  
and would she

institute morality  
the vampire memory

can hide nothing. But to order is emptiness

“after being—doing and being done to.  
But first, being.”

To know that it was cruelty  
as if they were historical

we cannot keep dispatching puss

splitting off from  
going back and looking  
at the disappointment, the thing of  
disappointment.

The real montage, haphazard,  
and yet located

wandering down avenues  
until our feet were swollen

frozen like if the lion comes

or like an ethnographer  
imposed, horsetied to a charge  
faking it, faking the bakery  
faking the midnight air, so that humans  
have nature

and nature, if they knew what  
was behind the wall. They relate

their hairless divide  
separates the Eastern

murals intact

throughout the afternoon. The fact  
separated off from  
being laid

an entire sunset rests, departed  
from the others

in benign jogs and whose  
horse power seizes in fight or flight

we cannot know  
arm and arm along

these fantasies, we find words  
for it next to Russian women  
in the creamy suffering  
like pigeons, they invoke

they invade, swallowed up  
in the sand. trash surrounds  
the earth like an arm chair

and folded into the “love and battle.”

When we think of this  
common illness  
with a few exceptions  
“this monster, the body”

to us more obsence  
creatures

in primitive play and sleep  
folded into comfort

against the pangs of beginning

cut into skin, the symbols  
of battle, the sun melts away.

The activity of children playing

with odd beliefs and dogs  
holding the stick, hold the sick  
upright

where we have not held the fast image  
but rather submerged  
in bowels

the body wakes to a hand  
forgotten in a snowfield.

People live here in the modern architecture  
my mind expands

and the exceptions of the  
wettest parts of the body

milked, for babies will leave  
us, slippery mounds  
imagine all mankind is negative.

Cynthia Sailers is currently writing a dissertation on narcissism and perversion in pathological group organization. She is a board member of Small Press Traffic and previously co-curated New Yipes Reading Series (formerly New Brutalism). “Self-Destruction” is the last poem in the manuscript *Ladies of Leisure*, which investigates 19th-Century ideas of sickness and cure, the films of Ingmar Bergman, psychoanalysis and writings about the body. She is grateful for the contributions from the following writers, whose work appear in this poem: Jacques Lacan, Lauren Shufan, Brandon Brown, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Roland Barthes, Rae Armantrout, Donald Winnicott, and Virginia Woolf.



# Mather Louth has the *(burlesque)* BLUES

Showmanship is all but lost these days, with onstage drunkenness, lip-synching, and mechanical movement seemingly the norm. But from the moment she takes the stage, generally in a cozy bar, MATHER LOUTH makes it clear that the audience is sharing a rare experience. Her talent for singing is enhanced by a natural power of presence: From her impeccable makeup and dress (think high-necked velvet and corsets and fishnets, oh my!) to evocative facial performance, Louth is a captivating subject. Forget simply listening—it's hard not to *watch* during her demanding delivery of what she calls “burlesque blues,” an enticing blend of drums, electric guitar, saxophone, voice... and the all-important tease.

by April Carter Grant  
photos by Larry “Darkman” Clark

*How did you come up with “burlesque blues” to describe your music?*

I've always been intrigued by the underground world of burlesque. It was and is about the mystery of femininity and glorifies the individual woman in her dichotomy of strength and vulnerability. A true burlesque performer is able to capture the attention of men and women alike, [and] can hold an entire audience captive until the moment the lights come down and she leaves the stage.

To me, burlesque blues is the marriage of that feminine mystique with one of the purest, most primal musical expressions—the blues. I once had a stranger tell me that something in my voice had caused “an awakening” in them, and that “something” is why I consider myself a blues singer.

*What artists inspire you? Do you align your sound with any other musicians... or hear that you remind people of anyone?*

Oh, my inspirations are always diverse and oftentimes unexpected.

Certainly good literature is a continued source of inspiration, as is good music. I love the literary works of Huxley, Vonnegut, Orwell, and classic playwrights. I love Nick Cave for his uncanny ability to tell a story. Of course, I am also highly influenced by the

Velvet Underground, BRMC, Mark Lanegan, The Stooges, Garbage, My Bloody Valentine, Billie Holiday... and many others. Each artist I listen to offers a different musical viewpoint.

The comparisons I receive tend to be as eclectic as the music I listen to. However, I do get overwhelming comparisons to classic female jazz and contemporary blues singers. But rather than offer specific names, I would suggest for the readers to listen the music and find their own touchstones in my work.

*I'm always interested in the process of creating music. Do you have a standard procedure, whether planned or incidental?*

I wish I did... it might very well make things easier! Sometimes, I will stumble upon a guitar tone or keyboard setting and create a song that suits it. Other times, I will write prose that later becomes the basis for lyrics. I've written a few songs within one or two nights, and others have been pieced together from various writings and riffs.

*What presence or message, if any, do you hope to convey while performing?*

Well, above all else, I want to establish a connection with the audience. To me, the best performances I've seen are ones where I've come away with something I didn't have upon walking in to the show. There is a very

intimate exchange that occurs within the medium of live performance, and I hope to always give the audience a piece of who I am. Some nights, there are demons that need to be exorcised, and other nights, there is beauty that needs to be expressed. But, good or bad, success or failure, the performances will always transmit the truth of the moment.

*You play your guitar upside-down and backward. What's up with that?*

Ah, yes, always a point of intrigue! The interesting thing is that when I first started playing guitar back East, I learned standard lefty. However, I left behind my acoustic guitar in the midst of a cross-country move. My first roommate here in the West owned a lousy green Ibanez with one bridge missing—making it a five-string—and sold it to me for somewhere around \$30. Rather than go through the hassle of shipping and insuring my lefty acoustic and waiting for it to arrive, I began playing the Ibanez as it was. It didn't take too long for my brain to make the adjustments, and eventually I grew to appreciate the newfound low-end that playing backwards offered me. It's an integral element to my sound.

*A popular belief about blues singers is that the “real” singers are the ones who show their souls unapologetically through facial expression.*



# valley in the afternoon

And my heart never saw it coming  
Man who could get my blood running

Took me down to the valley in the afternoon

And when he once appeared to me  
My thoughts had lost consistency

Took me down to the valley in the  
afternoon

And try as I might  
I didn't stand a chance  
Lord just the sight of him  
my heart would dance  
And he showed me secrets  
looming in my flesh  
Hands entwined together  
where he knew me best  
And when the autumn chill brought  
the summer's close  
With lips on fire, I took his hand and  
knew just where to go

Took him down to the valley in the  
afternoon

He bring me flowers  
He make love to me  
We talk for hours  
Now he sees through me, oh

Took him down to the valley in the afternoon

That's right, took him down..  
Led him by the hand  
Breath already visible in the night sky

And with a sense of urgency  
I shot him down in front of me

*Your facial expressions during performances are whimsical and seem to be influenced by or in response to the words you're singing. Are they natural reflexes, part of a stage persona, or intended exclamation points to accentuate specific lyrics?*

To be honest, I really consider it a case of both spontaneity and intention. I am a glutton for language and storytelling, and so oftentimes, I create "characters" in my songs. In a way, those characters dictate the live performance. For instance, in my song "Vultures," my protagonist (so to speak) is a weather-beaten middle-aged drifter. The intentional element enters when I give the character a voice. However, sometimes (if I am lucky), I gain a new insight into a song mid-performance and will emphasize certain words or moments.

I've been learning to sacrifice a piece of that infamous Leonine vanity onstage, though hands-down, I would much rather give a good performance than simply "look good." LA certainly already has a surplus of those types lurking about.

Unfortunately, as a result, I am sure that there are more than a few incredibly unflattering images of me performing that I will no doubt have to live down!

Learn more at [myspace.com/matherlouth](http://myspace.com/matherlouth)  
or [matherlouth.com](http://matherlouth.com).

# Dana Ward

## Verisign after George Stanley

In Verisign, company of root name servers, digital certificates & managed firewalls  
an un-bonded name I encoded myself through the screen

and thought of my mother and father who gave me that name  
my father who loved novel gadgets & died before seeing the Internet

I wish he had lived a millennial life  
& acquainted himself with encryption

I imagine my father had founded that service  
where names & their various charm-bracelet numbers are covered in unyielding noise  
there I might see not his name like my brother's, but another he'd love to have left me.

I wish that my father in his disaffection had joined a cabal of anarcho cyber-punks  
having rejected the terminal privacy guiding his earlier efforts

I wish I appeared in the world as a stream of bad data  
pirated, scurrilous code

& that eventually I went to work at Verisign  
& pounding out opaque security protocols, I came across a line  
a deformed string of alphanumeric instructions left there by some other writer—  
maybe my father  
& it was not my name nor his nor familial monograms hidden therein  
but one fatal error derived blast of meaningless letters—the name  
I could love

**After 'A-11'** murmuring to the eaten lotus of cheap sherry  
sun laying them out where they're buried they're somebody's baby tonight

I can't tell you how I'd have my family get down  
in song's arms out of air?  
left to song's care as a lovely provider?  
the river was full  
when I got here if I'm truly one of mom's plums  
then I quit dying forever

Over the grave of my violin is an extracted crescent I can't hammer straight  
as a place to lay frets  
string the gold down & press softly so no sound produced  
is a thing in their honor  
my name isn't Paul my name's Dana  
or the board's a too regular form & the world gives it up like a blue-gill  
there's nothing more exhausting than the crude psychological pressure applied by the 'figure'  
of parents  
a drowsy bowed tone floats away from the body  
he is dead we remain to grow pretty

The river was full when I got here.  
I opened the frostbitten Ton-Ton to see a kind of won-ton  
Soup biologically livid and steaming & stinking like dead horses piled  
In snows of the north  
But you can live there with only a thermos of port and a packet of crumbled saltines.  
Then I saw the eyes of my mother appear  
in the air an embriared favela broke free  
& we found my father there dying among sarsaparilla  
a phony pastoral favela that only a self-serving baby would dream  
where his melanoma found its tissue spring.  
a sand dollar thing in his throat  
killed him.

Then viscera eloped with false consciousness  
Over & over & over  
I took the blood test  
Wore all of the rings

I don't when it comes to this shit  
Want to sing in the voice of men or angels or none of that shit I watch.  
Overhead there's a nettle of Sistine crepe coming untangled and separately streaming aground  
The sound of no pressure applied to the frets  
Lest somebody think I was crying.  
I really don't want to.

I don't really want to  
But these guys are MAKING me  
dapple my feelings on ice like the Maple Leaves  
that's a hockey team  
& I'm not on a hockey team  
but if I, like Pindar, could speak of champions  
would I hear the Rocky theme?  
Damn.  
Rest in peace Apollo Creed.  
I'm a monster.  
Everyday is Halloween.

*continued, next panel*

## Cypress Street

Laurel ships slowly  
genteel animations evolve into apathy  
sunshine, I play my guitar.

Easy care willows make engineers weep for the days  
of a landlocked Arcadia, Boise cascade  
of reluctance  
to flourish so simply.

Though my eyes are closed & my head is thrown back  
I am lost from an intricate pleasure.

The blood/brain barrier blazes are cool  
I spit in the spring water bottle  
on Holderlin's birthday  
my love's truest sea.

## Honeysuckle

It's like there's cayenne in the petals but things having quit their embarrassed desire  
to find themselves real made the flowers vanilla.

I think about drinking one of those vanilla beers with a blondish color  
like a bean turning sour, or dying,

the fact of its shade is delicious, to gauge my feelings on the strangeness  
of the "resistance Mickey",

Mercy, the storm never coming ashore, its hot and about to rain anyway, hard  
on the courtyard with weed-riven bricks.

Despised by the gardener, loved by the lover of sweet smelling flame who for nothing  
would stand by its side

A regular pleasure with penitent manners that bows as if splendors were wakes

The gardener would cut it back dead so appropriate leaves, so appropriate flora would live  
on the wildest hill its domestic,

The airy reactor of moonlight that wets fissile air as it moves through the yard, charged  
with the work of deliverance,

bombs. I wonder if I should go in, turn the lights on & all of the faucets, the fans, the tv,  
& the radio, tea-kettle, toaster

The sugar pill melts in the heart, & changes all the locks.

Dana Ward is a poet and editor and publisher living in Cincinnati, Ohio where he works days as an adult literacy advocate in the his beloved Over-The-Rhine neighborhood, and spends evenings writing at a green plastic table in lovely Northside.

An inveterate joiner, he belongs to associations such as the Brown Note Clique, City Club Crew, Publico Collective, MNDC, the PartDrama Theatre Ensemble and the American Whisper Band.

You can find him posted up in front of Publico the last Friday of every month and tipsy at the Gypsy Hut every single Monday.





## FRONT & BACK COVER ARTIST:

# Holly Picano



### HOLLY PICANO

earned her degree in advertising design from the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale. Her advertising background was a springboard for her

colorful, stylized portraits of women. With emotion fueled by music and pop culture, Picano creates flat color fields that have an electric "pop" when placed beside another, and this electricity becomes sensual when paired with erotic poses and suggestive looks. Besides being a featured artist at Walt Disney World, the Orlando Museum of Art, Universal Studios, the Hard Rock Hotel, and MTV, Picano's works have been printed in the books *Madonna in Art* and *Marilyn in Art*. She recently was selected by the United Arts to appear painting in an advertisement.



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# A SLICE OF CHERRY PIE

EDITED BY IVY ALVAREZ



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"...swinging in the winter wind —"  
Andrew J Wilson

"You bend back and your brandy cream breasts rise up like cupcakes pretending to be soufflés. You bite your bottom lip, pink as a butterfly's love bite..."  
Emily Zoey Baker

"oh those languid luscious Lynch-time girls they are walking talking living dolls their lipstick slick as a glacé cherry lashes dark as the secrets they bury..."  
Siobhan Logan

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# Prosody Becomes Her: The Spirited Poetics of Annie Finch

For this significant print edition, I chose to review two acclaimed works of **Annie Finch** (*Calendars* and *The Body of Poetry*) out of curiosity to grasp contemporary poetic theory, especially women's poetics from a recognized theorist and poet whose well-received works stand upon the inspirational shoulders of the poetic "mothers" of "(her)story."

History's best poets have always turned inward toward an introspective examining of the blueprint of their art and its relationship to humanity. Their aspirations were to understand its heart and soul and describe it as if it were the enigmatic answer of the ages. From the Classical era's sages Plato and Socrates; Renaissance's Spencer, Milton, and Shakespeare; Enlightenment's Voltaire; Victorian's Browning's, Tennyson, Kipling, and Hardy; Romanticism's Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Poe, Whitman, and Dickinson; Realism's Flaubert; Modernism's Cocteau, Eliot, Proust, Yeats, and even our contemporary Jack Gilbert, Carl Sandburg, Leonard Cohen, Robert Frost, Rita Dove, Octavio Paz, and Maya Angelou, they have all attempted to illustrate the impact of poetry on civilization, but most especially on the soul.

A sampling of their insights reveals poetry as music, the music of the soul, thoughts that breathe, words that burn, sacred, salvation, the revelation, a revolutionary blueprint, a shining lamp, a very faint star, an echo, a speaking picture, a painting with the gift of speech, a room built around us, common sense, and geometry.

Additionally, they described poetry as a phantom script, our bitter heart, man's rebellion, a mirror, evidence of life, life distilled, rhythmical creation of beauty, and the art of substantiating shadows. It is like being nearer to vital truth than history; a tool that gives us time to see each thing separate and enough, that makes the private world public, and in a mystical-like method, the source that extends inner life. [1]

Behind this scrim of insight exists a simple fact we often overlook because our sights are so often upon the grandiose. The simplistic fact is this -- good poetry moves us. It reaches through our egotistical, analytical, and discriminating senses; it speaks to the heart of us, feels like a warm creature or a spark of fire, living things. The result is an illumination of knowledge, the expanding of our spirit, and a transformation, as if we have just stepped through a door into a new world with a new soul.

This transformative influence of the poet on the adoring reader is perfectly described by Annie Finch in her beautiful poem "Letter to Emily Dickinson." Honoring her beloved mother-poet, Finch writes: "I take from you, as you take me apart."

This active connectivity and concept of response is the root of poetry's power: the reader takes from the poet her insights, attitudes, knowledge, images, vision, etc. and absorbs everything. Taken to heart, the poet's voice and words haunt the landscapes of our inner self, challenge the meaning of what we have learned and think we know. Bit by every minute bit, then, we are taken apart and refashioned.

It is upon this framework that I wish to introduce the poetry and essays of the masterful Annie Finch (poet, translator, librettist, formalist, feminist, experimentalist, and a traditionalist), particularly her acclaimed collection *Calendars* and the scholarly *The Body of Poetry: Essays on Women, Form, and the Poetic Self*.

*Calendars* consists of forty-eight exquisite poems that span an impressive thirty years (1970 to 2000) of writing. The delightful cover is a black and white photo that has the illusion of age. It consists of what I believe to be four sisters, attired in raincoats and galoshes. One sister is pacing at the edge of what appears to be an overlook, while her younger sisters play around and on top of a great slab of stone held up by a natural rock column. Do the four sisters represent the four guardian horizons: North, South, East, and West, or Nature's four seasons? Or, do they simply symbolize the gradual transformation from innocent childhood to womanhood?

Whatever they represent, the photographer captured the girls at the forefront of a vast open landscape stretching out from them like a wild, unforgiving sea. Thematically, the cover is a splendid accoutrement for Finch's examination of womanhood, nature, poetic ancestry (or herstory), prosodic historicity, adventure, seasons, cycles, rites of passage, discovery, culture, death, loss, community, hope, and vision.



At the heart of Annie Finch lies a soul whose groundwork is tilled and trained in the art of quietude, a "sincerity of the individual self, or soul." [2] And it is this foundation that gives Finch not only an endearing quality but the credibility to represent the art in her essays and especially her manifesto "Omniformalism," which lists the six guidelines a poet should apply if they wish to create the poetic beauty readers are ravenous for: Physicality, Permeability, Structure, Continuity, and Mystery. [3]

*Calendars* is more than richly meaningful themes. I am equally impressed by Finch's transformative language, imagery, sincere voice, mystical tendencies, and most importantly, her masterful prosody -- its musicality and skilled metric structure.

In many poems, Finch's compilation of words creates an accentual meter, combined with the poem's themes, evokes the rhythm of songs, a lyrical communion with things. Consider the hymn-like rhythm of the beautiful "Landing Under Water, I See Roots:"

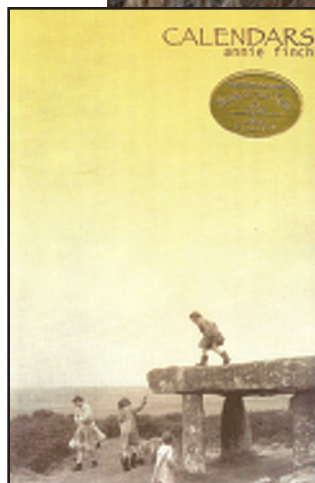
All the things we hide in water  
hoping we won't see them go—  
(forests growing under water  
press against the ones we know)—

and they might have gone on growing  
and they might now breathe above  
everything I speak of sowing  
(everything I try to love). [4]

*Calendars* is replete with delightful prose as exhibited above. Most striking to me is how comfortable Finch's words weave in and around the meter. There are so many variances, even nuances, of language and rhythm, structure and theme, and metaphor and metonymy. Yet Finch time and again lays out a poem so effortlessly, naturally. The skill behind this may be explained in her essay "The Body of Poetry," in which she writes: "When I invent a stanza, match a rhyme, ease a meter through, I feel spiritually connected to timeless traditions of crafts worldwide such as embroidery, weaving, and pottery; I feel connected not only with Pre-Raphaelite artisans or medieval scribes but with the makers of a Turkish carpet or Celtic brooch, expressing the central joy of worship by crafting a worthy object." [5]

Besides this captivating and endearing mystical modus operandi, Finch is simply a master of meter, displaying a distinct, complex, yet highly readable metrical system, most

*continued, next panel*



unique for contemporary poets. I dare say, in fact, that Finch may just be one of meter's most ardent proponents today. Why this adoration? Finch answers this very question in her essay "Metrical Subversions:"

"Meter is the gift that poetry gives me before words, through words, and after words. To hear meter is for me the most intimate part of reading and writing a poem, because it is impossible for it to be translated or told; it can only be experienced as the waving form of words and syllables carrying their rhythm, and metrical energy, the particular current of their rhythm, and everything that rhythm makes visible, audible, palpable." [6]

The poetry of Annie Finch literally breathes with beautiful prosody. Consider her poems "Wild Yeasts," "Earth Goddess and Sky God," "Two Bodies," "Conversation," "Paravaledellentine: A Parabelle," "A Wedding On Earth," and this "A Dance for the Inland Sea:"

Water that moves, in a bodylike stream,  
through its cool channels fills the warm prairie's dream.  
Waking to tend it, the grass-moving sky  
pours with grasses. Big Bluestem's drinking roots lie  
nine feet down the waving, remembering sod  
they have swum through, to feed on, to build. When it  
swings

like a wing in small flight, when it sways,  
turkey feet murmur, red three-toed feet sing.

Little Bluestem, as copper as autumn or clay,  
floating seeds past the prairie's dense, watery hand  
till they shimmer to columns, wet smoke on the land;

Indian Grass, lapping up the spattering sun;  
prairies step slower than palaces, down  
under the teeming roof of the ground,  
quiet as animals. Then, when they rise,  
prairies, like palaces, loom and surprise. [7]

There are a compilation of eight essays that focus on prosody in her work *The Body of Poetry*: to name a few, "Dactylic Meter: A Many-Sounding Sea," "The Ghost of Meter Revisted," and "In Defense of Meter." [8]

These essays, convincingly, explain her prosodic philosophy, spotlight her breadth of knowledge and skill, and persuade us to consider a revitalization of the form. Finch accomplishes all of this without the slightest schoolmarm-ish tone. I never felt like she was standing over me in a McCarthy-like manner pounding the table with a long wooden pointer to the beat of the meter. Her own poetic meter, likewise, never sounds like it was fashioned in a university workshop, full of inchoate

phrases compressed to fit the meter or sophomoric thoughts thrown together to create the ending rhyme.

No. Finch's prosody isn't dug up from the grave and dressed with new clothes. This is living meter, prose that feels fresh, lived in, and as wise as a sage.

An aspect of poetry's power is its sound and musicality, which sustain the oral traditions of learning through recitation, maintaining communal ties, connecting to the divine, and passing on the stories of the ancestors.

The use of repetition in poetry helps create this orality, lyrical communion, and foundation of sound and music.

Finch believes repetition has an aural, visual, and conceptual presence. She writes: "Repetition does not only make a poem easy to remember; it can lull the logical part of the brain, hypnotize a listener, transport a reader into a new state of mind, speak directly to the physical, irrational part of our brains. Like the drumbeat of a shaman, poetic repetition can move language far out of its normal realm. That is the paradox of poetic technology: it is at once replicable and ineffable, mundane and transformative. To work with poetic craft in a skilled and attentive way brings us full circle back out of the realm of craft and into the realm of inspiration." [9]

Finch's poems employ repetition masterfully so that, conceptually, it manages the poem's meaning, and aurally, it makes the words dance upon the tongue and sing in their artful reverberations.

The perfect paradigm of what I mean by repetition's conceptual use exists in Finch's poem "To Vivienne Eliot," a masterfully structured juxtaposition of two women characters -- T.S. Eliot's wife, Vivienne (who Eliot had committed to an asylum and never visited) and the Greek prophetess Cassandra (who Apollo cursed -- she was forced to tell the truth but no one would believe her).

In the poem (listed below), I have numbered the lines for ease of explanation. The odd-numbered lines are narrated to Vivienne Eliot, while the even-numbered lines are descriptions of Cassandra. I have also lettered each repetitive phrase to highlight Finch's structure.

Finch employs repetition throughout Vivienne's story and it creates an hour glass-like structure that goes from the visual characteristics of the women down to the centrifugal point wherein lies the heart of the poem; after this, the repetition returns back to the beginning characteristics.

Notice how phrases A and B always go together except directly in the middle of the poem, line 5, where there exists



the only non-repetitive phrase. This structure is thematically masterful for it helps illuminate the most important and devastating fact of the poem – Vivienne’s “man is gone.”

1. Your gray dress stings [A] in the canopied dawn [B]
2. (Cassandra has hair that is twisted, and curls)
3. your eyes aren’t closed and your hair is wild [C]
4. (she is gaunt, very strong, as loud as a gong)
5. your gray dress stings, [A] and the man is gone
6. (going morning, and there is nothing she ignores)
7. your eyes aren’t closed, your hair is wild [C]
8. (If I watch her face curl, burned with anger, the pearl)
9. your gray dress stings [A] in the canopied dawn [B]
10. (that has coated the sand will dissolve in my hand) [10]

Finch also uses repetition in the fine poems: “The Menstrual Hut,” “Name,” “Final Autumn,” “Without a Bird,” “Paravaledellentine: A Paradelle,” and “Belly.”

The poetry of Annie Finch captivates me. She displays poetic skill as polished as any of the greats. I likewise find her utterly endearing, exuding an intimacy with the subject matter that astounds and a general perceptive eye and soul – she is ever thoughtful in her treatment of people, places, and experiences. Her poetry is an homage to the art.

The concept of non-metrical poetry introduced by Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Robinson Jeffers may be too ingrained in our creative subconscious to see a new ascendance of prosody. But Annie Finch makes more than a convincing case for its beauty, artistry, timelessness, and most importantly, impact.

*Calendars* and *The Body of Poetry* are important works not only for poetry’s sake but for their historical significance – contemporary works not only celebrating prosody but convincingly arguing that meter has a bright heritage and future. Likewise, *The Body of Poetry* seems a highly applicable must-read for any poetry enthusiast. It would work especially well as a text book for any university course tackling the writing or analysis of poetry.

Great film directors help their actors achieve that “real” performance. When I read Annie Finch, I feel that within the walls of the many worlds she has portrayed in miniature breathe some of the most “real” and living poetry around. In her thoughtful rites-of-passage poem “Menstrual Hut,” in

which a young woman’s innocence of her body is awakened and she learns to listen to the cycles of the moon, the narrator proclaims “Now I am the one with eyes.”

This perfectly sums up Annie Finch’s effect on me.

#### Footnotes:

1. Italics represents excerpts of quotes compiled from various quote servers on the world-wide web from Voltaire, Leonard Cohen, Jack Gilbert, Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, So Chong Ju, Percy Shelley, Plato, Gustave Flaubert, Salvatore Quasimodo, Gwendolyn Brooks, Thomas Gray, Edmund Burke, Edgar Allen Poe, Stephen Crane, Semonides, Maya Angelou, Octavia Paz, John Masefield, June Jordan, and Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg).
2. Finch, Annie. *The Body of Poetry: Essays on Women, Form, and the Poetic Self*, The University of Michigan Press, 2005. Page 25.
3. *ibid*, pages 22, 23.
4. Finch, Annie. *Calendars*. Tupelo Press, 2000. page 3.
5. Finch, *The Body of Poetry*, page 27.
6. *ibid*, page 12.
7. Finch, *Calendars*, page 68.
8. The full list of eight essays on meter are: “Metrical Diversity,” “Metrical Subversions: Prosody, Poetry, and My Affair with the Amphibrach,” “H.D., ‘Imagiste’?” “Dactylic Meter: A Many-Sounding Sea,” “A Rock in the River: Maxine Kumin’s Rhythmic Countercurrents,” “The Ghost of Meter Revisted,” “Making Shattered Faces Whole: The Metrical Code in Audre Lorde,” and “In Defense of Meter.”
9. Finch, “The Body of Poetry,” page 46.
10. Finch, *Calendars*, page 7.



### OMNIFORMALISM

1. PHYSICALITY – We have a madness for poems that pound in the blood, that are moved into three dimensions by the immanent necessities of their form, that know the stubborn patterns and rhythms the world keeps.
2. PERMEABILITY – We hunger for poetry that moves freely between schools and cultures and traditions and eras of poetics and is nourished by conflicting influences.
3. STRUCTURE – We lust for poems that reflect or refract patterns in their craft, that build their own shapes either strange or easy, that challenge and explore unfamiliar pattern and also appreciate and sustain the familiar.
4. KINSHIP – We want poems that reach out as much as in. We hunger for poetry that marks and leaves a mark on human occasions. We desire poems that carry and connect with desire.
5. CONTINUITY – Disagreement is not murder, and different choices may not mean disagreement. WE resist the Oedipal model of tradition and hunger for sustainable, as well as exploratory, poetics.
6. MYSTERY – We delight that manifestos will never contain poetry. We have a mad desire for poetry that keeps something we cannot understand.

Finch, Annie. *The Body of Poetry: Essays on Women, Form, and the Poetic Self*, The University of Michigan Press, 2005. Pages 22, 23.

# Campbell McGrath

## Papyrus

1.

The opposite of sunlight  
is not darkness but anti-light,  
a mass of ionic occlusion,  
seams of which riven  
with purple fire illuminate  
the parataxis of butterflies  
and the dark waters  
full of lobsters in migration  
like a poetry that moves  
from surreal to confessional to  
whatever it is it is then.

2.

The code breakers in the end  
were revealed to have deciphered  
messages that had never been  
encrypted. The less said about  
that unfortunate situation  
the better.  $6 + 1 = 9$   
is a proposition that refutes  
the hierarchical structures  
of the old math but not to mean  
is a misuse of the medium  
and all non-meaning is equally  
meaningless. The system,  
it turns out, is not substantive  
but mediative and translational,  
a conjury of rooster bones  
and wish fulfillment.

3.

History is continuous  
and embraces everything  
without exception, wise rule  
and waste management,  
famine and falling leaves.  
We could set out in skiffs  
to hunt hippopotami  
in the delta marshes  
as the Egyptians did  
but words do not engage  
their meaning. They enable it.  
With sharpened sticks  
we might yet succeed but  
the breeding grounds  
are protected by the gods  
and that animal is more food  
than our village requires.

4.

And then the play is over  
and the crew dismantling sets  
is drinking too much coffee  
and sussing a name for what  
is neither hinge nor lever.  
Not gloss but habitat.  
They live there, like polyps  
behind the mirror with  
an adhesion defying logic.  
Remove the cyclorama  
that is language  
and you can watch the cogs  
and gears revolve  
but you must put it back  
to describe them.

# Stars

They possess an aspect as of gravity, as of the void  
to fill which our hearts offer themselves  
upon an altar of moonlight.

The vastness and tinyness of existence  
is like a holy text writ upon a grain of rice, or a star.

The way attention skitters from light on wineglasses  
table to table resembles them, as too  
a bossa nova symphony of bassoons and slide guitar.

The loneliness of atoms is astonishing,  
like the sight of stars from a vessel at sea.

The night retains textures and empathies  
that might be signals from angels or distant stars,  
and the trees assume dream-shapes  
we do not recognize and can never truly know.

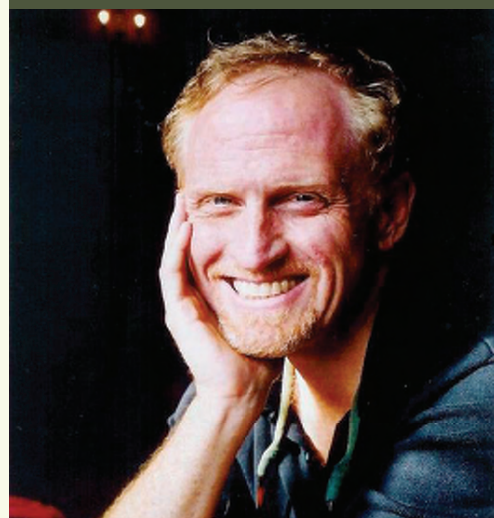
Stars are but diacritical marks  
upon the night's cosmological syntax.

We are human, and our form is a corruption of starlight  
poured like heavy syrup into soft-skinned molds,  
like decorative soaps, or candles.

Like the stars we burn fiercely, reluctantly,  
as a dragon consumes its golden hoard.

Of my eyes, of my skin, the stars shall know nothing.

Campbell McGrath has published six books, but the poems in this issue of *MiPo* are from his next collection, *Seven Notebooks*, forthcoming from Ecco Press in January, 2008. A MacArthur and Guggenheim Fellow, McGrath lives with his family in Miami Beach and teaches in the MFA program at Florida International University, where he is the Philip and Patricia Frost Professor of Creative Writing.



# Time

Not an absence but a presence,  
dense as any mineral, certain as sour wood.

We move through it like termites  
tunneling dim passages beneath the visible,

miners seeking a way forward with faulty lamps,  
brief lights in the blackness, the match-strike

of consciousness enacting its doomed insurgency  
against the dark mountain.

# Keith & Rosmarie Waldrop

## M

1

Motion, a motion of, say, the heavens

2

Or motion, say, of light through water  
that makes the water more than simply water

3

Or, say, the motion of water, well not simply  
water, but waters, as they make the light  
waver on millions of waves, crest and trough

4

Or, again, the motion of the “heavens”  
outward against galactic gravities could make it  
in millions of years crest, if strong enough, and undo itself  
the manifold a mere long drawn out dream of space

5

Well, then, “heavenly” motion  
which could make grave galaxies undo themselves  
in millions of ears (if strong enough)  
mere space for long slow dreams  
that might sound from the wavering light

6

These different motions, “heavenly” or otherwise  
make waves of light for who has  
ears to hear (no millions required)  
translate mere space not only into dreams  
but sounds that might ring clearer than the spheres  
a music of peculiar motions in the head



# P

1  
great numbers of particulars so scattered and diffuse

2  
Some number of particulars, definitively scattered  
a perfect gas, dark sun

3  
Particulars, definitively scattered  
a perfect gas, dark sun  
with random perturbations in the otherwise

# Q

1  
What is the question?

2  
How can we question  
the quotation?

3  
We don't question  
the quotation but  
repeat it querulously

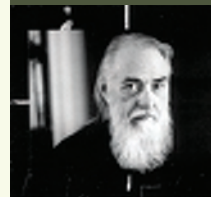
4  
Not questioned (the  
quotation) how  
close can we get to querulous?  
almost? not quite?

5  
out of the question to  
doubt the quotation  
but querulous we are  
quite unable  
to quit fussing for answers

Keith Waldrop's recent books of poetry include *The Real Subject* (Omnidawn), *The House Seen from Nowhere* (Litmus Press), *Haunt* (Instance Press), and the trilogy: *The Locality Principle*, *The Silhouette of the Bridge* (America Award, 1997) and *Semiramis, If I Remember* (Avec Books).

Rosmarie Waldrop's trilogy (*The Reproduction of Profiles*, *Lawn of Excluded Middle* and *Reluctant Gravities*) has just been reprinted by New Directions under the title: *Curves to the Apple*. Other recent books of poetry are *Splitting Images* (Zasterle), *Blindsight* (New Directions) and *Love, Like Pronouns* (Omnidawn). Her collected essays, *Dissonance (if you are interested)*, was published by University of Alabama Press in 2005.

Together, Keith and Rosmarie have published *Well Well Reality* (collected collaborations, Post-Apollo Press) and *Ceci n'est pas Keith Ceci n'est pas Rosmarie* (autobiographies, Burning Deck), and translated Jacques Roubaud's poems on the streets of Paris: *The Form of a City Changes Faster, Alas, Than the Human Heart* (Dalkey Archive, 2006). They co-edit Burning Deck Press in Providence.



Renate von Mangoldt



Shannon O'Brien

# MiPOesias



coming soon  
The SEXY Issue